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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9885
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3271
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 6686
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 2343
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 9332
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ APR QUITO 0257
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0434
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 4225
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SUBJECT: U.S. VOLUNTEERS TO OAS ELECTION OBSERVATION
MISSION - VIEWS FROM THE FIELD

REF: LIMA 1373

¶1. Thirty-eight Embassy officers and family members volunteered to be observers for the Organization of American States (OAS) Election Observation Mission on 4/9. The U.S. volunteers were dispatched to polling sites in ten departments: Ancash, Arequipa, Cajamarca, Cusco, Ica, La Libertad, Lambayeque, Lima, Piura, and Tacna. The complete OAS Mission included 126 observers covering 17 departments. U.S. volunteer observations concurred with those in the OAS press releases that on the whole the general elections were fair and transparent.

¶2. Some observations from the U.S. volunteers in the field follow. The general impression of the U.S. observers was that the elections went smoothly and problems below were generally isolated incidents.

-- The most common complaints by voters to observers was the long wait to vote, particularly when voting tables opened late, and in some cases voters complained of difficulty in finding the correct polling location and voting table.

-- Though some voting tables opened late, this did not seem to impede voting significantly. The official time for voting tables to open was 0800 and most opened within an hour of the target though some tables were observed to open as late as ¶1100. The reasons for the delayed starts included the late arrival of voting table members and necessary time for the table members to sort through the instructions and material set-up.

-- Observers reported sporadic incidents of voters who were not allowed to vote because their name did not appear on the official voter list. ONPE field officers in at least one location allowed these citizens to vote by writing in their name on the printed voter list, while at most sites people whose name did not appear on the list were not allowed to vote. (Note: This problem largely arose as a result of technical reasons such as the recent consolidation of voting tables and people who applied for national identification cards or changed their addresses after the December deadline. End Note.)

-- The recurring complaint observers heard from voting table members was that the process was too bureaucratic and required them to sign too many certification forms (e.g., the president of each table had to sign each ballot and the three table members each had to sign numerous certification forms.)

(Note: The most common complaint from the voting table members was the quality of the pre-packaged snacks offered as sustenance for the table members. End Note.)

-- There was an incident observed in Tacna where the Voting Table President was urging voters to vote for presidential candidate Alan Garcia, JNE and ONPE intervened, the behavior stopped, but no action was taken.

-- Many polling facilities were not conducive to people with disabilities. However, observers saw ONPE and JNE officials making efforts to accommodate disabled voters.

-- Some voters who had to travel large distances to vote complained of transportation cost price gouging. For example, voters reported that the price of a ticket from Lima to Piura tripled for election weekend.

-- Many observers recommended that ONPE increase the training for the field staff and voting table personnel. Though ONPE and JNE staff on site were capable and dedicated, there was some inconsistency from one polling site to another on how they handled voters who were not on the official polling list. Also, observers reported that some voting table members were unclear on how to handle improperly completed ballots.

-- Security was adequate with police at all polling locations and multiple armed soldiers at most sites. There were limited reported incidents of violence. The most notable incident was at Ricardo Palma University when presidential candidate Ollanta Humala voted and the situation turned tense with poor security preparation and provoking protesters and

media (Reftel). Another group of observers in central Lima received reports of an isolated fistfight between voters in line from different parties and a problem of rocks being thrown through windows from outside the polling site.

-- Observers were uniformly impressed with the dedication and attention to task of the citizens conscripted to be voting table members who worked all day and processed, depending on the table, between 150 to 250 voters.

¶3. OAS Mission Ambassador Lloyd Axworthy told Embosffs on 4/11 that the OAS Mission will observe the second round run-off. However, Post's understanding is that the current OAS Mission budget was fully allocated to the first round of elections.

¶4. Comment: The OAS Election Observation Mission was a success and Post volunteers were actively engaged in the process. If asked, Post would be happy to provide volunteers to observe the second round elections. End Comment.
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